

Kreutzer, R., J. Von Behren and J. Jacobs (1996). Serious mushroom poisonings requiring hospitalization in California, 1990-94, California Department of Health Services.

ABSTRACT

Hunting and consuming wild mushrooms is an increasingly popular avocation, as well as a means of subsistence for sub-populations in the United States. Consuming wild mushrooms is relatively safe for individuals with the necessary expertise. However, each year The California Department of Health Services learns of tragic death or illnesses which occur when unsuspecting individuals ingest toxic mushrooms. We conjectured that there may be vulnerable sub-populations that should be targeted for public service announcements and education about mushrooms. Therefore, we reviewed California's hospital discharge database from 1990 to 1994 to ascertain demographic characteristics and outcomes of "serious" mushroom exposures, requiring a hospital admission. We found that children less than 5 years old have a higher rate of hospitalization for "serious" poisonings. Therefore, parents should be reminded of the need for greater supervision of children in areas with wild mushrooms. We did not find evidence that poisoning rates differed significantly between ethnic/racial groups; however, this finding may be limited by a failure of these groups to seek care after becoming ill. A short discussion on the symptoms and treatment for the potentially lethal ingestion of amatoxin-containing species of mushrooms is included.